April 2022

NFEC Seminar

EPA from a practitioners perspective

Andrew Parsons – AP-Ex Training Consulting Ltd

- Semi – retired following 28 years at Toyota

- Led all technical training at Toyota including the award winning Apprenticeship Development Centre

- One of the team that wrote the original (2014) L3 Engineering Technician standard- mechatronics pathway with colleagues from JLR, BMW, Nissan and others

- Ran first ever apprentice cohorts and their EPA's for this standard

- Now independent consultant specialising in Apprenticeships, the Levy, Technical Training and Lean implementation using funded training solutions

- Chair of the Automotive Trailblazer Group, Member of Auto Council Skills Working Group

- Chair of new group to write 'new' L3 Mechatronics Apprentice standard

- Contracted to the IET for Assessment, and EPA Guidance briefings – 168 stage 1 interviews for L3 Eng. Tech. to date!

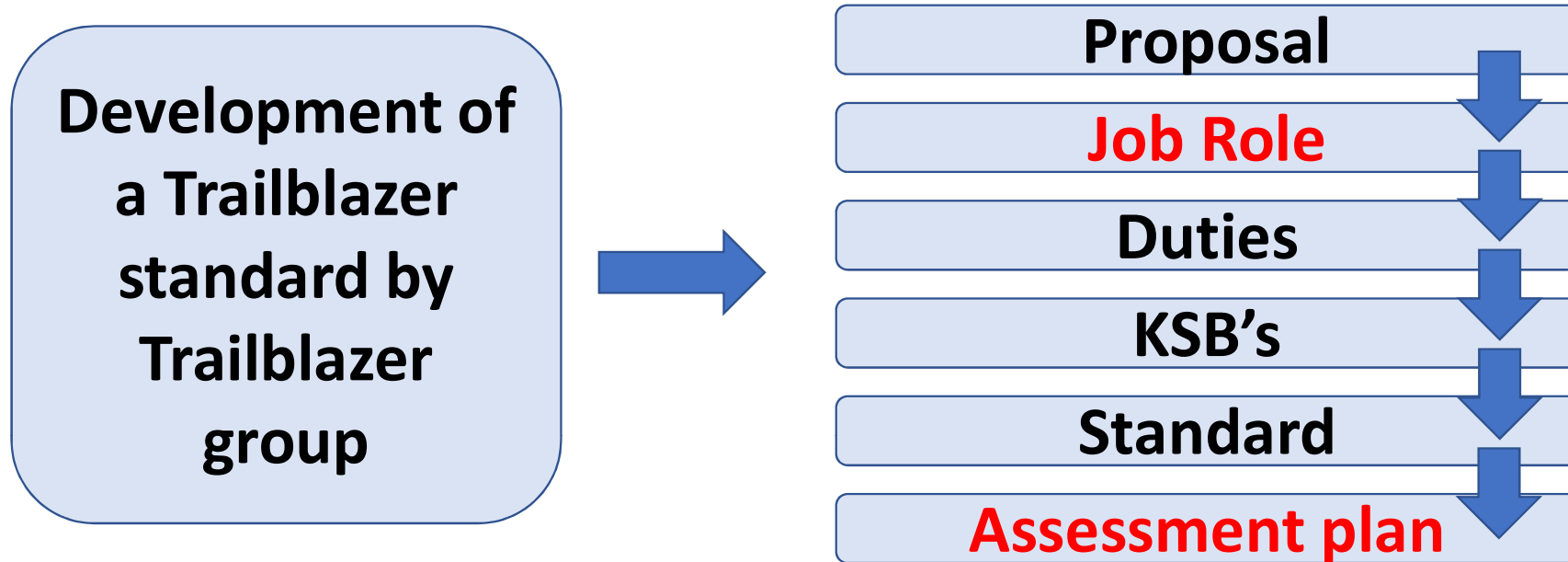- Co-owner of an EPAO focussing on Lean and Improvement standards

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Why EPA?

- The testing and validation process should be independent and genuinely respected by industry.

- The test should be holistic, at the end, and assess whether the individual is fully competent and employable, within their job and their sector.

- Employers should be directly involved in assessment. They must make sure that the assessment consistently tests apprentices to the standard specified in the qualification. *(i.e employer TB groups write the assessment plan)*

- Assessors should be entirely independent and have no incentive or disincentive related to the outcome of the assessment.

- The Government, a government body or regulator should approve and oversee the assessment process, or the organisations in charge of that process, in a light touch way

These points are still valid and EPA will not go away – Providers need to embrace EPA and not view it as a necessary evil. The days of frameworks are in the past

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Trailblazer Standards

Development of a Trailblazer standard by Trailblazer group →

| Proposal |
| **Job Role** |
| Duties |
| KSB's |
| Standard |
| **Assessment plan** |

- All Trailblazer standards are against a specific job role

- The KSB's - the required Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours - follow on from the intended job role.

- Ultimately, the EPA can be thought of as measuring competence in the job

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Pathway Occupational Profiles - General

Issues arise when an Apprentices job role does not match the requirements of the pathway and thus the specialist K&S for that pathway. Examples from L3 Eng. Tech:-

Tech support pathway apprentice performing a role in maintenance – gave poor evidence for:

- produce technical documentation that contains all the relevant and necessary data and information
- develop effective business and/or customer relationships (in the context of the Tech Support)
- provide technical advice and guidance to others

Tech support pathway apprentice performing a role in stores – did not meet most KSB's as not performing a technical role

Mechatronics Technician working as a bench repair technician on a narrow range of equipment – gave poor evidence for Mechanical and Fluid power competence, and nothing on planned maintenance as all tasks were on broken items returned from service

Product Design and Development apprentice performing a role in CNC Machining – gave poor evidence for:

- apply electrical and electronic principles to develop products devices and equipment
- identify, diagnose and rectify design problems through the whole creation process including design studio, workshops, test environments or under laboratory conditions

Are you confident that your apprentice is able to HOLISTICALLY provide evidence from their job role for all of the K&S for the standard in question?

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Preparation

- KEY POINT - EPA should be confirmatory only.

  - Candidates should be presented at EPA only if they are ready and prepared

- This is the Provider and Employers Job to do.

- Prior to the EPA

  - Gateway must be completed

  - Briefings should be attended

  - I advise that candidate showcase portfolios, presentations and PIRFs (for example) are ready for, and reviewed, at Gateway by the provider (but this is not mandated in the Assessment plans)

Examples of what not to include in portfolios
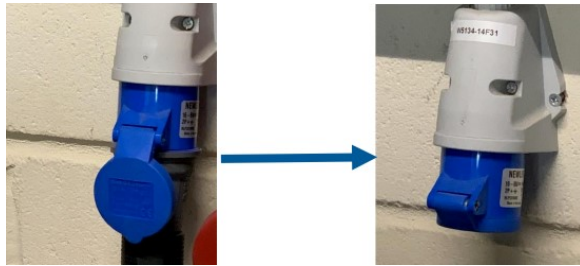
Two pictures supposedly 'proving' that disconnection of equipment had been done
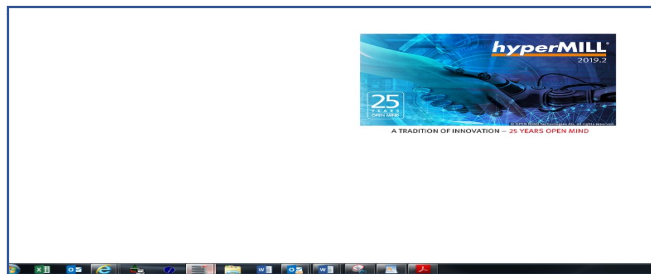
"I loaded up the CAM Software as shown in the image above".

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992

This Document is the regulations that I must adhere to when working on computers and these act as guidelines on the Do`s and Don'ts of working with display screen equipment.

Since the part wasn't big and didn't require too much material moving, I thought a medium sized flat file would fit the job as illustrated below.
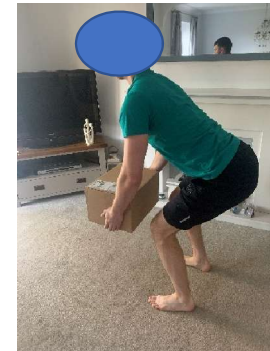
Manual lifting example at home due to furlough

Poor examples from Portfolio's

"I then spoke to my Manager verbally"

"The next step after locating the fire exits and first aiders was to re-read the health and safety at work act so that I was up to date and to make sure I was complying with all of the rules and regulations correctly. I also read through some other regulations such as COSHH and electricity at work regulations. I also read through the law of health and safety and what is expected from me as an employee."

"To guide me through the task I gathered some resources"

Portfolios that are direct 'lifts' from competence qualification write ups complete with knowledge answers!
Portfolios that are 170 Mb upload size and 135 pages of A4

Poor examples from Interviews

"You alright mate?" – First words from a candidate on opening the Zoom call

Generalisations – 'would' & 'could' about what was done rather than clear competence examples.   Use of 'we'.

Unable to give effective communication or Teamwork behaviour examples, similar for CPD if included in the standard

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Preparing the Apprentice

- Cross reference any written submission to the KSB's and include any cross referencing sheet in the submission and double check for full coverage of the required KSB for that method

- Ensure all of the apprentices documentation is complete at the time of gateway where permitted by the assessment plan

- Proof read and critique thoroughly

- Ensure all evidence is in the form of competence statements and holistically covers the required KSB's.

- Evidence pieces should be varied and not 3 very similar jobs. Wider work activities such as STEM activities and Problem Solving activities are allowable and in some cases preferable to give coverage across the range and in particular the behavioural aspects

- Consider mock practice interviews or – better – include a formal interview of the apprentice as part of the employer sign off of competence stage at Gateway.

- Ensure all apprentices have been briefed by the EPAO – typically this is best to take place around 3 months prior to gateway or earlier.

- Consider asking your EPAO to brief all staff (delivery team, work based assessors etc) regarding the EPA and gain their advice at an early stage of the programme

Note!

- Providers who have template documents and who brief and prepare their apprentices well, are far less likely to have candidates who fail.

- Consider how you can use the gateway as a confirmation of the Apprentices learning journey and involving the employer, rather than as an admin step.

EPA ISSUES

EPA Issue

- It's easy to critique the principle and application of EPA, BUT it's hard to think of a better solution which meets the requirements for an independent, impartial and consistent assessment across the country for apprentices on a given standard.

- EPA also "holds the providers feet to the fire" regarding delivery of competence for employers

- It is up to the employer groups to set the assessment plan BUT – it is recognised that there are areas in which EPA could be improved:-

  - Standardised KSB's across groupings of standards, especially around behaviours

  - Basic 'rules' by level such that each assessment methods are delivered in the same way (i.e. length of EPA period, duration of each assessment, number of multi-choice questions)

  - 'Porting' of knowledge qualification outcome into the EPA to meet the 'K' criteria of the standard – but this requires a mandated qualification in the standard.

- Key point is that providers need to understand each assessment plan, its methods and structure deeply – just as you would for any other qualification, remembering that the apprenticeship itself is the qualification in its own right.

Engineering & Manufacturing Route review outcomes and impact

Route Review – Main impacts

- L3 Eng Tech to be split into sub components, each to be an individual standard.

- Direct linkage to UKSPC for Eng. Tech. registration will no longer be possible

- KSB's for each pathway will change

- Assessment plans will change completely and could have as many as three separate methods – some will include an observation or skills test, plus perhaps a multiple choice knowledge test along with retention of the professional discussion.

- Gateway 1 now removed from L3 Eng Tech

- Competence quals at L2 and L3 unlikely to remain (some may stay for aero standards)

- Unlikely to be able to mandate L3 Tech cert but TB groups will try to retain these quals.

Standard by standard

a) L6 Degree Apprenticeships   Slow progress but is progressing

b) L4 Maintenance   No recent update, but good progress

c) L3 Surface Finishing   £14K funding band upheld – no further progress

d) L7 standards   Issue with gaining cost information in required formats from HE but improving

e) L3 Eng Tech x-sector pathways:-

    9. Machining – TB Group exists, proposal out for consultation, target Sept 22 starts! ⭕

    10. Mechatronics – TB Group exists, working on proposal and duties, target Sept 2023 starts ⭕

    11. Product Design and Development – Unchanged – High risk that this pathway will not be progressed ❌

    12. Toolmaker and Tool and Die Maintenance Technician – very likely to progress through a group formed by ⭕
consortium of trade bodies/employer groups GTMA, CBM, CMF. target Sept 2023 starts

    13. Tech Support – Likely to progress led by GTA England once (9) Machinist is further on in development ⭕

f) L2 Lean Manufacturing Operative – TB Group is required to be formed to rewrite this standard

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QUESTIONS